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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore what particular areas of organisational cultures facilitate the development and progression of women as football coaches and coach developers. The English Football Association provided the context for the research. Previous statistics demonstrate that recruitment, retention and progression of women in English football coaching and tutoring is lower and slower than their male counterparts. In-depth interviews were completed with twenty six women coaches and coach developers during November 2015 and February 2016 to understand their personal experiences as linked to the structure and culture of their sporting governing body, and analysed using Schein's (2004) theory of organisational culture. Three key tenets of organisational culture were found to be most influential on the career development of the participants: Journeys and crossroads (the establishment of a learning culture); Inclusive leadership; and Vertical and Horizontal Relationships. The research demonstrates the need to identify disparities between espoused values and assumptions in order to enact cultural change towards supporting more women to be valued, included, and progressed in the sporting workplace.

**Key words:** Sport Coaching; Gender; Culture Change; Workforce Diversity

## 1   **Introduction**

2           In the UK, the popularity of sport coaching continues to grow and with it, the size of the workforce  
3   has increased sizeably. Over 1.3 million people are now classed as regular, active coaches in the UK  
4   delivering coaching to over seven million participants each week and 70% of this coaching workforce are  
5   qualified (Sports Coach UK, 2016). Yet, while numbers have improved, the balance and representation  
6   within the UK coaching workforce has not. Women remain peripheral figures on the coaching landscape.  
7   Indeed, the most recent statistics from Sports Coach UK, now UK Coaching, the UK's central agency for  
8   the recruitment and progression of coaches, reveal instead an *increase* in the number of men in the  
9   profession to 70% in 2016 from 62% in 2006 (Sports Coach UK, 2016). In relation to the ratio of qualified  
10   coaches, this imbalance becomes even more acute: 82% of qualified coaches in the UK are men (Sports  
11   Coach UK, 2011). High performance coaching, such as Olympic level, is also overwhelmingly dominated by  
12   men across the globe [89% of Olympic coaches are men] (author A, 2017). When put alongside data that  
13   illustrates that 97% of the UK qualified coaching workforce are White and 92% are able-bodied (Sports  
14   Coach UK, 2011), the profile of sport coaching remains a privileged profession for only a particular portion  
15   of society with a imbalance of not just 'faces' but also power. In essence, coaches do not reflect the  
16   increasing diversity of the participants that they serve.

17           A different 'lens' is required on the issue of the lack of diversity within the coaching workforces. This  
18   article conceives gender diversity within a wider vision of organisational success or performance. The slow  
19   pace of change in the make-up of the coaching profession is related to issues of cultural change, of deeply  
20   embedded ideas and behaviours within sport that have been so long in the making, they have become  
21   normalised. As Burton (2015) calls for at the end of her review of the under-representation of women in  
22   sports leadership, future research should work towards a greater scrutiny of organisational cultures and  
23   how they may or may not enhance the work experiences of its employees. The purpose of this current  
24   study was to explore the experiences that women coaches and tutors share of their organisations and the  
25   particular areas of organisational cultures that have facilitated their development and progression. The  
26   English Football Association (The FA) provided the single context for this study in order to provide in  
27   greater depth, a cultural analysis of one sporting context within the UK. The purpose of collecting women's  
28   experiences was to evaluate the existing culture, as well as to understand what the desired culture is; to  
29   bridge a gap between how the coaches and tutors experienced their organisations, to what they need from

their environment in order to feel developed and nurtured. The research was carried out with both women as coaches and tutors who are firmly embedded within their sport and organisation, having progressed somewhat through the football coaching pathway. At the time of the research, the coaches were at a critical point of progression making the step up from level two to UEFA B licence (The Football Association, 2017b). The experiences of women as coach educators or tutors (termed 'coach developers' within The FA) are entirely absent from previous literature. For the participants that were tutors, as well as coaches, such is the low representation of women in this role in English football, their experiences were collected from all stages of the tutor pathway.

### **How the sport coaching and sport organisational culture is holding women back**

For the purpose of this paper and research, Ogbonna and Harris' (2002, p. 34) definition has been adopted in order to understand organisational culture as "the collective sum of beliefs, values, meanings and assumptions that are shared by a social group and that help to shape the ways in which they respond to each other and to their external environment". The choice for this definition, amongst the many that exist, comes from the focus on not just behaviour or 'the way things are done' but on the drivers that lead to these tangible outcomes, how these are reproduced and the outcome of this way of being. The intended outcome for this exploration is to understand what organisational features are most pertinent to providing a better working experience for women. This is to add to the small body of existing literature that situates its lens upon organisational structures in order to interrogate the under-representation of women coaches (e.g. Burton, 2015; Burton & LaVoi, 2016; LaVoi & Baeth, 2016; LaVoi & Dutove, 2012). The research also aimed to highlight what is needed to further women's visibility and value, in order to tap into a wider reach of expertise and experience that having a diversity of coaches can offer.

The under-representation of women coaches needs to be understood as a *symptom* or an outcome of a deeper issue, rather than the problem *in itself*. This extends further than just an issue of representation, but rather is a question of organisational practices and processes that will affect all individuals within an organisation. There is a reasonably sized body of literature that has examined the connection between organisational culture and gender (in)equality within sporting organisations, but very little within a UK context (e.g., Shaw & Penney, 2003; Shaw & Slack, 2002). Existing work rarely examines what are the values of a sporting workplace and the impact on its employees (such as coaches and coach developers).

1 Previous research has found that norms and values often exist that maintain 'sameness' whilst 'othering'  
2 those who do not fit within these parameters (Greenhill, Auld, Cuskelly, & Hooper, 2009). Research within a  
3 US collegiate context highlighted how the norms and values of many athletic departments are based on  
4 White, Christian, heterosexual, able-bodied masculinity and those groups of coaches or administrators who  
5 did not 'fit that bill' were marginalised (Fink, Pastore, & Riemer, 2001).

6 The impact of an inclusive sport workplace culture on both men and women, that values gender  
7 equity from the 'top down' (senior leadership) was a finding in the work of both Spoor and Hoye (2013) and  
8 Doherty, Fink, Inglis, and Pastore (2010). Spoor and Hoye (2013) demonstrated that organisational cultures  
9 in sport organisations that valued equity led to more positive outcomes for both men and women, such as  
10 higher workplace engagement and commitment. Genuine senior support for gender equity had a positive  
11 and psychological impact on the relationship between employee and employer (Spoor & Hoye, 2013).  
12 Doherty et al. (2010) highlighted the benefits that a representative workforce can bring when a sport  
13 organisation is characterised by a culture of diversity. Workplaces grounded in a culture of respect of  
14 differences, flexible working practices, a person-centred approach rather than just task-orientated, and an  
15 ethos of equifinality were characteristics of 'deep-individual and group driving forces' (Doherty et al., 2010).  
16 Rather than just 'surface level' drivers of change such as mission statements, codes of ethics, or diversity  
17 training, it was deeper level drivers such as challenges to and deconstructing embedded meanings and  
18 values, advocating women coaches, and intolerance to insensitive language that had the greatest impact  
19 on increasing diversity within the coaching workforce. However, these drivers were the toughest to enact  
20 and were met with greater resistance and challenge because it required changes to fundamental values  
21 that conflicted with existing ways of 'doing things' (Doherty et al., 2010).

22 Cultural change that has led to greater gender equality in the UK sport coaching workforce is yet to  
23 be fully realised. The embedded nature of the culture of a national governing body (NGB) is rooted firmly in  
24 beliefs and expectations of men and women which are then played out and reproduced by the social actors  
25 within that organisation (Kihl, Shaw, & Schull, 2013). This is particularly the case for NGBs and  
26 organisations that are more established and therefore, have deeper historical roots (Shaw & Slack, 2002).  
27 One such example is the English Football Association (The FA), founded in 1863, that oversees both men  
28 and women's football in England.. This provided the context for the present study.

## 1     **Contextualising the research**

2             The FA took control of women's football in 1993 and have since supervised a dramatic rise in  
3 women's participation in the sport. While this may provide the appearance of inclusivity and equality  
4 (Fielding-Lloyd & Mean, 2011). The FA still retains a gender imbalance in positions of football leadership,  
5 including coaching, coach development, on boards and committees, and in leadership roles. The FA have  
6 three coaching strands, including the youth coaching pathway, the goalkeeping coaching pathway, and the  
7 main, core pathway (The Football Association, 2017b). The core strand covers the entry Level One  
8 coaching certificate (or license) and leads up to the UEFA Pro Licence. At the time of the research,  
9 statistics revealed an average 75% drop-off in the number of women at each stage of this core coaching  
10 pathway (The Football Association, 2015). The purpose of this research was to enable The FA to better  
11 understand the culture of the NGB to identify how to support the progression of women coaches in order to  
12 reverse this decline between the licenses. The research was based on the experiences of women football  
13 coaches at a 'critical point' of progression – that is, making the step up from level two to UEFA B license  
14 qualification. This critical point is identified as such because of the significant change in time, cost, and  
15 intensity of the course from level two to UEFA B license. This then has an impact on the number of women  
16 entering the football tutor (coach developer) pathway. Coaches (men or women) are permitted onto the  
17 tutoring pathway once they have been a UEFA B licensed coach for a minimum of two years. Therefore, if  
18 women coaches are poorly represented at the UEFA B licence level, this will result in a significant reduction  
19 in the number of women making the transition to tutoring. The lack of representation of women as coach  
20 developers is illustrated by concerning statistics. At the time of research, figures showed the number of  
21 level one qualified female tutors to be 40, falling to five at level two, three at level three and one at level  
22 four. This represented an 87% decline between levels one and two, a 40% decrease between levels two  
23 and three, and a 66% between levels three and four. Overall, the decline in number of women tutors  
24 progressing through the pathway from levels one to four was 97%. Therefore, the research was also based  
25 on the experiences of women as coach developers (tutors) to understand what features of organisational  
26 culture support their progression and development.

27

28

## 1    **Theoretical framework**

2            The present study was concerned with how organisational culture within an English footballing  
3 context shapes the progression and experience of women as coaches and tutors and how they respond to  
4 the environment in which they work. This was for the purpose of not just understanding women's  
5 experiences, a well-documented issue within the sport and coaching literature, but to present what  
6 dimensions and content of culture has facilitated their coaching development. A number of sport  
7 management authors have utilised an array of organisational theories to examine gender equity as related  
8 to women in sports leadership positions (e.g., Greenhill et al., 2009; Lovett & Lowry, 1994; Shaw & Allen,  
9 2009; Shaw & Penney, 2003; Skirstad, 2009; Spoor & Hoye, 2013; Whisenant, Vincent, Pedersen, &  
10 Zapalac, 2007). As yet however, none of this body of research has adopted Schein's (2004) theory of  
11 organisational culture to understand gender equity within sport NGBs, the most commonly accepted  
12 framework in business management for uncovering the levels of workplace culture (Schroeder, 2010).

13            Schein's (2004) theory is a three-tiered integrative model of organisational culture consisting of  
14 artefacts, espoused values, and basic assumptions. First, at the surface level of Schein's model is artefacts  
15 – the cultural components of an organisation that often are tangible or that can be heard or felt, such as  
16 facilities or resources (Schroeder, 2010). These symbols are simpler to identify but only present a part or  
17 even false view of an organisation (Schein, 2004). The espoused values which refer to the "norms that  
18 provide the day-today operating principles by which members of the group guide their behaviour" (Schein,  
19 2004, p. 18). Espoused values are an organisation's articulated principles and values that the group claims  
20 to be striving towards, such as strategies, mission statements, visions or philosophies (Deal & Kennedy,  
21 1999; Schein, 2004). However, while these values may be what an organisation report to be working  
22 towards, it is not uncommon for an organisation to act oppositely to its 'espoused' beliefs and values  
23 (Schein, 2004). Instead, organisational culture may be effectively accessed and analysed through  
24 examining what lies beneath artefacts and stated values. Basic assumptions are what drives organisational  
25 behaviour as these provide the "mental map", which guides individual perceptions, feelings, and actions  
26 within a culture (Schein, 2004, p. 32).

27            The strengths of using Schein's framework are principally twofold. First, Schein's model was chosen  
28 for the level and focus with which it examines culture within a workplace. The level at which culture

manifests itself is understood at a much deeper level within the framework than early cultural models, which focused on the outer layers of manifestations, such as artefacts and patterns of behaviour, and linked culture to organisational performance. Schein (2004) stressed the importance of in-depth understanding, labelling artefacts as 'superficial' and instead advocated an assessment of beliefs and values (underlying assumptions) within an organisation to answer the 'why?' question. Extracting deep and inner layers of manifestations generally involves speaking with key members of an organisation, in this case those who are often on the peripheral (women leaders such as coaches and developers) (Schein, 2004). A second benefit of using Schein's model of organisational culture is for how it distinguishes between different layers of culture (artefacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions) (Homburg & Pflesser, 2000). Previous theories have not made this distinction between the different layers. Such distinctions are key towards an analysis of the interrelationships between the layers of culture within an organisation (Homburg & Pflesser, 2000).

Schein's work has not yet been used in a sport organisational setting and therefore, perhaps more theoretical development of this model in this context is needed. There is also the concern as to how easy is it to distinguish between what is professed as an organisation's culture, to what are the basic assumptions. Some scholars argue that organisational culture is more dynamic than Schein portrays, and rarely so coherent and integrative (Raz & Fadlon, 2006). Nevertheless, the strength of the model has been demonstrated by accurately representing the indirect process from cultural values to organisational performance, and the salience of norms as well as values in performance outcomes (Hogan & Coote, 2014). Schein's work highlights that values in a workplace are not sufficient to lead to improved organisational outcomes; behaviours and actions are guided by what is 'normal' within a workplace. Layers of organisational culture can mediate the effects of what organisations purport to value (Hogan & Coote, 2014). It is these underlying assumptions that form the centre of the present study: how do women coaches and tutors make sense of these and what is most influential in their development. In essence, the research endeavoured to reveal tenets of organisational culture that are pertinent to the retention and progression of women football coaches and tutors, according to the perceptions of such women.



## 1    **Methodology**

### 3    **Research design**

4    Much of what is at the heart of a culture will not be revealed in discussions by those who set the espoused  
5    values or determine the artefacts (Schein, 2004). Nor can organisational culture be measured (Schein,  
6    2004). Therefore, this work is grounded in a pluralist perspective; recognising the existence within  
7    organisations of diverse sub-cultures arising from factors such as professional affiliation, status, social or  
8    divisional interactions (Willcoxson & Millett, 2000). The work was based on a qualitative research design.  
9    To capture deeper levels of organisational culture and reveal basic assumptions, the research considered  
10   that discussions with employees, in this case women coaches and tutors, were essential.

### 12   **Sample**

13        The study involved in-depth semi-structured interviews with 16 women football coaches and 10  
14   women coach developers during November 2015 and February 2016. Letters of information were initially  
15   emailed to a list of 34 potential participants, provided by The FA. For the 26 coaches and coach developers  
16   who agreed to participate in the research, formal information letters and consent forms were sent prior to  
17   meeting. The coaches had either recently completed their UEFA B coaching licence qualification, or were in  
18   the process of making the transition from completing their level two coaching qualification to undertake their  
19   UEFA B coaching license. The sample included three coaches who had attended mixed-sex level two  
20   courses, seven coaches who had attended mixed-sex UEFA B courses and six coaches who had attended  
21   the women-only UEFA B courses. 15 of the coaches were actively coaching at the time of the interview and  
22   held either full-time coach roles for The FA, or football academies and foundations, or coached part-time in  
23   centres of excellence, player development centres, and/or for grassroots teams.

24        The 10 tutors were also experienced coaches in either amateur or semi-professional clubs, regional  
25   talent clubs (RTCs), or as part of the national set up, and they were all actively tutoring at the time of the  
26   interviews. Six tutors had completed their level one qualification and also held the UEFA B licence. Three  
27   tutors were level two tutors and had also completed their A license. One additional tutor also held the pro  
28   licence. The participants self-reported their ethnicities as White (8), White British (15), Black (2), and Asian  
29   other (half Burmese) (1) and all were non-disabled. The coaches and coach developers were aged  
30   between 22 and 50 years old. Due to the potential high profile of the participants and the small pool of the

population from which the sample was drawn, the research team assigned participants each a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

### **Data collection**

In order to achieve a greater depth into their experiences, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant either face-to-face or on the telephone (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Following Patton (1990), an interview guide approach was employed to structure the interviews, drawing upon previous research led by author A and grounded in Schein's concept of underlying assumptions and guide on analysing culture (Schein, 2009). The purpose of the interview was to elicit participant reflections and ask questions more broadly on the topic of organisational membership (Schein, 2009). The interview schedule for the coaches and coach developers included: (a) the participants background in and early experiences of coaching and/or coach development; (b) their experience of the coaching and/or coach developer training process; (c) their motivations to progress; (d) their engagement with The FA in terms of support for women within coaching and coach educating. Participants were also asked to elaborate on any further relevant information that arose during the course of the interview. Each interview lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

### **Data Analysis**

One of the principal objectives of the research was to provide a forum and platform through which the women's voices could be heard and their experiences shared. Time was spent building a rapport and relationship with the participants prior to each interview through correspondence and during these exchanges the study aims were made explicit. Reflexivity regarding the potential unequal power relations between interviewer and interviewee was a key component of the methodological process of the research and each participant was considered the authority on their experiences (Brabeck & Ting, 2000). Before data analysis began, all coaches and coach developers were also provided with a copy of their own transcribed interview. Respondent validation allows a more active role for the participant within the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Nevertheless, it is understood that even this strategy adds another layer of co-construction between the researcher and the participants because essentially it is a technique situated within a realist ontological position and therefore, is concerned with knowing the 'truth' (Braun & Clarke, 2013). For this reason, member 'reflections' on the transcript was adopted as a technique

(Tracy, 2010). None of the participants requested any changes to the transcripts. These were then thematically analysed by the first and second authors (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The analysis process involved ongoing discussions between both researchers regarding the development of themes and sub-themes across the data set. Themes were coded using a predominantly inductive approach; however decisions regarding what text was coded were made in relation to how the participants' experiences related to cultural dimensions with the organisation. NVivo10 was used to facilitate a more efficient and thorough procedure for data management, and analysis.

## **Findings and Discussion**

Through the analysis and interpretation of the findings, three prevailing areas of organisational culture were identified that supported the progression of women as football leaders (coaches and tutors). These included: Journeys and crossroads (the establishment of a learning culture); Inclusive leadership; and Vertical and Horizontal Relationships. Within these, there are sets of basic assumptions that support, as well as conflict with the progression of women.

### ***Journeys and crossroads not cliff edges***

A key finding was that in order for (women) coaches and tutors to progress, they needed visible, clear, credible pathways for progression and continued support for each stage. Coach development programmes and the amount and type of education were important considerations, and should be culturally conceived as 'journeys and crossroads' not cliff edges. The coaches and tutors desired a learning culture, rather than a series of qualifications that were hoops to jump through. Sally, who had attended the UEFA B Women course and worked for The FA, had been encouraged to apply for a course bursary by her County FA to progress her career. She had found a synergy between the espoused values of The FA that they wanted coaches to learn and develop and the reality of this for her own career:

*The FA have just recently...got these elite female coach pathways ...I feel like [my County FA have] put a lot in my pathways to help me to be better as a coach and as a person as well, ... I feel like they've really supported me and they're preparing me to not just be a coach but to literally be a team leader for example, [or] maybe go into my tutoring as well, which is something I want to do within the next year or so. ... Yeah, so I feel really empowered, and I feel like they are there to really*

1 *support you... they are trying to help more women get into like [different areas] like coaching [or]*  
2 *refereeing... I'm still on this advanced [women's] programme, which is amazing. Without that I'm*  
3 *unsure of how I would have made that big step on my own. (Sally, UEFA B Women course).*

4  
5 Dimensions of a strong learning culture within an organisation include the creation of ongoing opportunities  
6 to learn, empowerment, collaboration, providing leadership, and personal growth (Marsick & Watkins,  
7 2003). Sally's experience is testament to a degree of learning culture within her club and County FA. Alex,  
8 a more senior coach developer, and a coach, was aware that working in The FA context as a full-time  
9 coach had 'opened doors' for visible career pathways, grounded in a culture of continuous learning:

10 *I think I was quite fortunate in that respect that I was in The FA. When I did my level one I was*  
11 *working for a county FA, and then from there I think it has always been a case of we want to get you*  
12 *to where you can be rather than me having to fight and find a way to get there, which I know a lot of*  
13 *other females have to do. (Alex, level two tutor)*

14 Working for The FA had afforded a degree of cultural capital and meant that Alex was firmly embedded  
15 within the organisation, fully exposed to any learning culture within the organisation both at a county and  
16 national level. As these testimonies exemplify, many coaches could follow a number of pathway options  
17 depending on their skill sets and aspirations, and felt supported to do so by managers, colleagues, and  
18 course mentors.

19  
20 However, the coaches and coach developers that worked outside of a County or central FA role described  
21 more difficult and time-consuming experiences of training and qualifying and were frustrated at the lack of  
22 support toward opportunities to practice, undertake continued professional development (CPD) and further  
23 qualifications. The following quote from Lucy illustrates the disappointment felt by some coaches outside of  
24 "the system" with the lack of support provided and lack of access to The FA's learning culture following their  
25 UEFA B Women courses:

26 *I think in terms of supporting the coaches, there's ad hoc short term support getting through*  
27 *qualifications because that might be the figures, but there isn't a long term support in terms of what*  
28 *do they do next, how do they develop? How can we recruit more in? How can we make it a more*

1       supportive environment? ... It's like you finish your qualification and then you just 'drop off' and you  
2       go. (Lucy, UEFA B Women course).

3       This illustrates inconsistent experiences of learning cultures for those inside or outside of the organisation.  
4       This is a finding that adds to the organisational level of LaVoi and Dutove's ecological model of barriers and  
5       supports for women coaches, providing further detail of what an 'unclear pathway' looks and feels like  
6       (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012). For the coach developers in particular, there was an absence of continuous  
7       opportunities to develop and progress, a system to capture learning, a chance to engage in a dialogue with  
8       the organisation, and a lack of strategic leadership (Marsick & Watkins, 2003). Rebecca, a level one tutor,  
9       explained that although they were encouraged to assist their coaches in developing career plans, this  
10      culture of learning did not extend to coach developers:

11       *That doesn't happen for us as tutors...they're not giving me an action plan for how I can progress*  
12       *through this. So where can I go after delivering the Level 1? That is really limiting...It's the nurturing*  
13       *thing... I think it's worse for females. I think quite clearly [they] identify the male tutors, because*  
14       *they potentially could move up into full FA roles. (Rebecca, level one tutor).*

15  
16      Rebecca's quote sheds light on the necessity of organisational support and leadership to progress. *Career*  
17      *sponsorship* of women in the workplace is crucial and influential for creating opportunities, giving support,  
18      and providing advocacy (Barsh & Yee, 2012). The view that individual motivation and drive was not enough  
19      to progress was reinforced by a number of the coaches and coach developers. Nicola, a level one tutor,  
20      explained that she found it difficult to access information for career progression opportunities:

21       *At the moment I'm going through a process of up-skilling myself to tutor different courses. I think it's*  
22       *been difficult... in regard to progressing... in the tutoring it was difficult to get onto the pathway, and*  
23       *then I found my options were slightly limited... although there was a little bit of support at first...then*  
24       *it kind weaned off. So the information wasn't disseminated that well either, even across the existing*  
25       *workforce...I did everything in my power to get there, but I didn't really get much support. (Nicola,*  
26       *level one tutor)*

27      All of the tutors discussed similar reservations due to the lack of strategic leadership offered to and visible  
28      opportunities for career progression. Specifically, the requirement to possess an A-license coaching

1 qualification to tutor level two coaches was seen as a 'no return on investment' situation. As a result of the  
2 persistent nature of many underlying assumptions towards women's competencies and abilities to coach,  
3 there were significantly less opportunities for women than men, to be in paid coaching roles. The following  
4 testimonies illustrate this:

5  
6 *I would doubt very much, at my age and situation that I would be able to do an A licence... I wouldn't*  
7 *have been able to justify spending 6.5 grand, or whatever the heck it is. And, what would I have got*  
8 *out of it? Where would it have taken me? Would I have been any further than I was?...I do think,*  
9 *sometimes, that it's a little bit more difficult for us [as women] to progress, ... I think we're less likely*  
10 *to be in a position where we would get some help with the cost, for example, because we're less*  
11 *likely to be in the pro clubs. (Fiona, level one tutor).*

12  
13 *To go work somewhere you need knowledge and experience, so if you're not allowed in an area... I*  
14 *would like to be as high as tutors [can go] but I think the key is letting me as well, so it's getting*  
15 *those opportunities (Samantha, level one tutor).*

16  
17 *[So I'm between] a rock and a hard place. The old adage of the glass ceiling. It's been put there, it's*  
18 *concrete. It's not even glass, I can't break through it... I'm very good friends with [a male coach at a*  
19 *local professional club], who's another tutor who I trained ... And I said to him, 'you work with the*  
20 *Academy, do you reckon I'll ever get a job in the boys' Academy?', he went, 'you've got no hope.*  
21 *They won't employ a woman'. (Rebecca, level one tutor).*

22 For the tutors there was a sense of disconnect between espoused values and actual practice on the  
23 ground regarding a sense of a learning culture. In particular, what was missing was the creation of ongoing  
24 opportunities for learning, strategic leadership, a sense of relationship and dialogue between tutors and the  
25 organisation, the creation of systems to record and capture learning, and empowerment of tutors (Marsick  
26 & Watkins, 2003). These tutors felt they were often led to the 'cliff edge' or completion of such  
27 qualifications, and pushed over into an often empty abyss of poor support or fewer job opportunities once  
28 the coaching or tutor license had been achieved. The group norms, defined by Schein (2004: 12) as "the  
29 implicit standards and values that evolve in working groups" within some men's football clubs and

academies made certain career options redundant for women due to the discriminatory assumptions. Previous research has discussed that some women coaches do not feel a sense of belonging or connectedness to their coaching community and this is heightened through elusive, gendered, discriminatory actions and 'closed networks', often dominated by men (author A and author B, 2016).

## ***Inclusive Leadership***

The need for a diverse and inclusive culture of leadership was a key and reoccurring theme throughout the interviews. The concept of inclusive leadership in this context referred to the organisational conditions that facilitate and endorse the inclusion and diversification of a workforce and a fair and equitable workplace (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010), a crucial organisational component that has been shown to shape the experiences of women coaches in previous work (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012). All of the coaches and coach developers felt that The FA needed to work harder to diversify their workforce to be more representative and attractive to, the playing and coaching population. Lea, a part-time coach who had attended a UEFA B Women course, stressed the benefits of having a balanced team of coach developers leading courses:

*I think to get your UEFA B you need to have a tutor who understands you and be able to support you...there are a few courses that hopefully will have a female influence on it because I think that's definitely important ... to have that influence of having on the course a female tutor that you could go and talk to. (Lea, UEFA B Women course).*

This view was reinforced by Carrie, a coach [level two] and coach developer [level one]:

*I think a massive one was seeing the course director to be a black male ... you realise that there is a chance for you as a black female to be at the top of things as well. I think that was a good eye opener. I think seeing all the different types of tutors as well. (Carrie, UEFA B Mixed course).*

Concern was expressed due to the lack of racial diversity in the leadership levels of The FA and the lack of awareness, and respect, of some coach developers towards gendered, cultural and religious differences between coaches. In particular, some White, male coach developers were reported to have continually made sexist and racist comments on the courses, and to have acted in ways that undermined women coaches and coaches from Black and Minoritised Ethnic backgrounds. Hannah, felt that one senior

1 developer was actively trying to hinder her progression and demonstrate his distrust of having a woman  
2 coach. Hannah described her experience of the level 2 course as “*the worst experience in the whole FA*  
3 *course programme*”:

4 *I found it quite hard that the way we were taught on that course was, ... you got put down a lot ...*  
5 *Everyone had the same feeling that this tutor did not actually want us [women] to pass. ... [For*  
6 *example, when delivering my first session] the tutor stopped me completely, told me everything*  
7 *already that I'd done wrong, made me reset up the area, and made me change my session...he just*  
8 *did it to make [a point] ... it was just purely putting me down. So I'd feel absolutely awful and I'd be*  
9 *really shaken up and I wouldn't know how to manage it, ... And that made it really difficult for me to*  
10 *feel comfortable coaching... He really put me off, I didn't want to be a coach going through that*  
11 *experience, I just wanted the whole course to be over and done with. (Hannah, level 2 course).*

12

13 The women's experiences of feeling undermined and undervalued, and reports of having to prove  
14 themselves against unequal assumptions of their abilities as coaches is congruent with previous work in  
15 this area (author A, 2010; author A & author B, 2016; Fielding-Lloyd & Mean, 2011; Kilty, 2006; Theberge,  
16 1994). The contribution of the present study is connecting these experiences to the leadership of The FA  
17 and whether their espoused values of recruiting and progressing a greater diverse coaching workforce  
18 matches what their basic assumptions are of who makes a good coach and what makes effective coaching.  
19 This is evidence of how sociocultural ideas and expectations underpin organisational decision making and  
20 demonstrates the complex multilayer nature of the under-representation of women coaches (LaVoi &  
21 Dutove, 2012).

22

23 The endorsement and value towards a variety of leadership styles, for example the delivery of coach  
24 education courses, was raised during the interviews as coaches reflected on their course experiences.  
25 Some coach developers were described as being very informative and helpful during and after the courses,  
26 with personalised leadership styles:

27 *For me with my mentor and the support I've received, he's been fantastic because he's made it*  
28 *individual and I think he's understood that because [I have another job], I might not be able respond*



1 or take sessions as frequently as other people that coach on a regular basis. (Layla, UEFA B  
2 Women).

3  
4 However, some coaches noted that The FA tutors also taught one particular style of coaching and you had  
5 to replicate this style, be an “FA robot”, in order to pass courses. Specifically, the participants felt that there  
6 should be room for creativity and different styles of leadership. The testimonies from Mary and Rachel, who  
7 had both recently attended different UEFA B Mixed courses, illustrate this view:

8 *I do think The FA tutors; they are all of the same ilk. They are all middle aged, white, male with*  
9 *the same kind of philosophy. There is no real diversity on any course I have been to with The*  
10 *FA at all. ... Even the young ones coming up I am like ‘Oh you are just going to fit into that*  
11 *mould’, I can see it. There is no real diversity in the young people that they are picking. (Mary,*  
12 *UEFA B Mixed course).*

13 *I think as well you have to be an FA robot to get far in The FA. You have to breathe their*  
14 *values... I don’t necessarily always coach the way that they believe you should be*  
15 *coached... There’s no room for creativity... This is how The FA want you to coach. If you don’t*  
16 *coach like that and you’re a little bit creative and things like that, I think it tends to hold you*  
17 *back. If you’ve got an opinion as well it holds you back. ... [like] if you’re sat around a table of*  
18 *coaches and everybody is like ‘Yeah, we do it like that’ and you’re the one that goes ‘Actually*  
19 *have we thought about doing it like this?’ Recently I’ve learned to bite my tongue because I*  
20 *know it’s got me nowhere. It’s actually set me back. (Rachel, UEFA B Mixed course).*

21 According to Schein (2004), culture is created through leaders imposing their beliefs, values and  
22 assumptions on a group. These values and assumptions are embedded through primary mechanisms such  
23 as how leaders allocate resources, rewards and status, how they recruit, select, and promote, and through  
24 deliberate role modelling, teaching, and coaching. Coaches attending coach education courses learn how  
25 to get along in The FA and become accepted as a member of this group from current leaders (Schein,  
26 2004). Some participants reported leaders that imposed inclusive values, beliefs and assumptions that  
27 aligned with the espoused values of The FA regarding inclusion and the anti-discrimination action plan (The  
28 Football Association, 2017a). This resulted in positive experiences of the coach education and tutor

1 courses and inspired some participants to pursue careers with The FA. Others reported less favourable  
2 experiences of leadership that illustrated a disparity between espoused FA values of having a more diverse  
3 and representative coaching and tutoring workforce, and basic assumptions of women's competencies and  
4 contributions as coaches.

### 5 ***Significance of Vertical and Horizontal Relationships***

6 The relationships and common interactions between employees within a workplace are telling signs of an  
7 organisation's culture and basic assumptions. The participants reported the significance of supportive  
8 *vertical* relationships (with those above them) and *horizontal* relationships (with those at the equivalent  
9 level). This included colleagues such as co-tutors, co-coaches, and fellow course attendees. The  
10 significance of quality workplace relationships is in creating a sense of belonging, an experience that  
11 women report to feel less than men (author A & author B, 2016; Murphy, Gibson, & Kram, 2017).

12 A number of coaches who had a supportive manager and/or mentor above them reported this vertical  
13 relationship to be hugely beneficial during the UEFA B licence course in providing observation  
14 opportunities, experience of coaching different teams, preparing session plans and preparing for the  
15 assessment. Sally's testimony illustrates this:

16 *Without [my tutor] and having that extra support I don't think I would've passed, I think he helped*  
17 *me, so that was a massive point. ... he helped me have that confidence for when I went and did that*  
18 *final assessment, which I think without that it would've been a really daunting situation, and I'm*  
19 *unsure whether I would've come out of it how I did. (Sally, UEFA B Women course).*

20 Supportive vertical relationships, in this case, refer to the day-to-day belief and value offered by senior  
21 managers in the skills and abilities of the various coaches and tutors within their environment. More formal  
22 vertical relationships such as mentoring are an often advocated method to realise the progression of  
23 women in particular, within the workplace. However, while such relationships are often put into place and  
24 established, this does not always translate into a quality, effective, nurturing, consistent mentor-mentee  
25 relationship that helps women progress in, for example, sport coaching (author B & author A, 2017).  
26 Nevertheless, The FA's Coach Mentor Programme, as part of The FA's Coaching Strategy, was facilitative  
27 for some coaches, and the structure and quality of the programme demonstrated a commitment to valuing

1 women as coaches that extends beyond an espoused philosophy. Lea benefitted from this programme and  
2 the relationship with her mentor:

3 *I think the best thing about the course was the support I've had after it. So the mentor to carry on*  
4 *the journey. Not just 'here's your UEFA B, you're done'. You have that support, have that mentor,*  
5 *have that tutor who's going to be there ... I think it's great to just be able to have the ability to pick*  
6 *up the phone and just be able to call my tutor and just be like, "Oh, can you help me with this*  
7 *session, or can you come down to this". ... So that, as a sort of, an output of the UEFA B I think was*  
8 *great.(Lea, UEFA B Women course).*

9 Sarah, a senior, experienced tutor, explained that the on-the-ground, daily support she had received from  
10 her manager was the reason that she had progressed in her role and tutoring career:

11 *In terms of the higher courses that I deliver... there have been some key people that have helped*  
12 *me with that... they really supported me in terms of my delivery as a tutor at that level, and I think*  
13 *they were key people that really made me believe that I could do it and perhaps could do it well...I'm*  
14 *not sure I would have persevered with that higher level tutoring, or perhaps got to where I have got*  
15 *to if I hadn't have had them as mentors.*

16 In contrast to those coaches who felt that the support they had received during and after the course  
17 was hugely facilitative to their development, a number of coaches reported that they did not have a  
18 relationship with anyone above them who could sponsor them and this had hindered their progression. The  
19 quotes below from Claire and Rachel illustrate the disappointment they felt with the lack of ongoing,  
20 committed relationship with the local or central organisation:

21 *Afterwards I don't feel like there has been a lot of support. So I still haven't been assessed,*  
22 *and I haven't been given an opportunity to have an assessment on the course...In the last six*  
23 *months I don't think there has been any contact... the lack of support afterwards for getting*  
24 *people towards assessment or being assessed, I think has been a little bit poor. (Claire, UEFA*  
25 *B Women course).*

26 *In my whole coaching career...there's never been that support of someone [above me]... It's*  
27 *been a bit of a lonely journey (Rachel, UEFA B Mixed course).*

1 These contrasting experiences illustrate inconsistent practices and support in terms of relationships  
2 between managers and coaches. For women as tutors, the role was even lonelier than being a coach.  
3 Some of the participants felt in their vertical relationships, they were treated akin to ‘casual workers’ rather  
4 than valuable members of The FA workforce and suggested changes in the contractual agreements to feel  
5 more integrated into, and supported by the organisation.

6 Beyond vertical relationships, common interactions and horizontal relationships were noted to be  
7 positive and coaches felt that this was facilitative to their coach development. Many of the coaches had  
8 maintained relationships with fellow coaches (both men and women) beyond just the process of  
9 qualification and were supportive of each other on an informal yet frequent, day-to-day basis. For Layla,  
10 this provides a source of support for her own professional development:

11 *The people I chose to sit with have supported me and I still speak to them now, and I know if I was*  
12 *ever stuck... on certain sessions or certain tasks, I know I could ring them and that we would be*  
13 *able to talk about it. ... We’ve definitely created a network from there. (Layla, UEFA B Women*  
14 *course).*

15 For the tutors, who were in agreement that the role of tutor was often more isolated and autonomous than  
16 their other role as a coach, one of the principal facilitators that enabled them to feel as though they could  
17 develop further in a non-intimidating environment was co-tutoring. Group functioning will reflect the wider  
18 cultural context from which are derived broader and in-depth basic assumptions about reality and  
19 relationships in a workplace (Schein, 2004). For Georgina, a level one tutor, having a co-tutor was a source  
20 of understanding and support in her balancing act between a full-time job outside of football, and her roles  
21 as a coach and as a tutor. Having supportive horizontal relationships improved both her professional and  
22 personal development:

23 *There wasn’t a lot of support from The FA that I was aware of when I started tutoring but because I*  
24 *went through it at the same time as another colleague that works [here] and also another guy*  
25 *outside [of work] who we’re both friends with, it was more talking to them two really and having that*  
26 *other tutor support network, that if you’ve got a question, you can ask....So working together with*  
27 *him was really good, because the first few courses we did together, so that he could watch me do*

1        *some theory stuff and I could watch him do some practical stuff, so that we became more confident*  
2        *in it. (Georgina).*

3        Some of the more senior tutors attributed their success in progressing on the tutoring pathway to the  
4        support of a colleague who they had worked with and who had progressed along the pathwa in a similar  
5        way. Despite Sarah's full time involvement in a footballing capacity, a facilitative mechanism in itself,  
6        supportive horizontal relationships was one method by which she felt her confidence had improved in order  
7        to push for progression as a tutor:

8        *I guess it's my colleagues who are doing the same as I am and that informal discussion around all*  
9        *the, 'We tried this. That didn't go so well.' 'Try this,' and reviewing and reflecting. I think that's*  
10       *really helped me. (Sarah)*

11       These relationships are vital components to organisational performance (Schein, 2004). The nature  
12       of these vertical and horizontal relationships was crucial in addressing the needs of women within a  
13       footballing context and is congruent with previous research that demonstrates that positive work  
14       relationships are crucial to the retention and progression of women as coaches (e.g., author A & author B,  
15       2016; author A, 2010; LaVoi & Dutove, 2012; Murphy et al., 2017). The findings also support the idea that  
16       these relationships are impactful when they include a particular emphasis on learning and lead to growth of  
17       leadership identity as well as the skills to advance (Murphy et al., 2017).

18       Understanding these accounts within a context of organisational culture, it is evident that a key  
19       tenet to support the progression of women as coaches and tutors is the quality, consistency and  
20       meaningfulness of relationships in the workplace. Many workplaces do not grow or govern internally to a  
21       point of clarification or nurturing of personal relationships (Schein, 2004). Related to improving a sense of  
22       inclusion through relationships within an organisation, this extends to beyond stating the value and  
23       commitment to progress gender equality (espoused), but needs to be underpinned by an a demonstration  
24       of the value ascribed to the identity and backgrounds of coaches (in this case, women) through work to  
25       establish and maintain positive vertical and horizontal relationships. Low social integration is often  
26       correlated with occupational burnout if combined with other work-related outcomes, particularly for women,  
27       and that more attention needs to be paid to women's working conditions to challenge this (e.g., Norlund et  
28       al., 2010; Soares, Grossi, & Sundin, 2007). Previous research has reported how women coaches

experience feeling left out of (predominantly male) power networks, that the strength of the 'old boys' club is detrimental to women's professional progression, interpersonal factors significantly shape women's experiences as coaches, and working relationships with male coaching colleagues are often strained (e.g., author A, 2012; author A & author B, 2016; Allen & Shaw, 2013; LaVoi & Dutove, 2012). What the present study demonstrates is the type of relationships (vertical and horizontal) that are vital to progression and the quality and frequency with which they need to occur. Schemes such as mentoring programmes can work, but it is just as important to get the daily interactions and work-based relationships right, above and alongside the coaches. For The FA as an organisation, if they are to meet their strategic goals towards recruiting and progressing a more gender equal coach and developer workforce, it must be able to develop and maintain a set of internal relationships among its employees (Schein, 2004).

## **Concluding thoughts**

This paper articulates three key tenets of organisational culture that are vital to the support and progression, in this case, of women football coaches and tutors. The purpose of the research was to examine organisational culture, beyond what is presented as reality (espoused values or philosophies), and provide more evidence of the salience of taking an multisystem approach to the complex issue that is an under-representation of women coaches (Burton & LaVoi, 2016; LaVoi & Dutove, 2012). More needs to be learnt, beyond what might be claimed by an organisation, about what works for women 'day-to-day' and how they are supported on the ground. This can be accessed through an assessment of organisational culture to build a more accurate picture of this beyond what is made evident by the organisation (artefacts) or what is claimed (espoused). A key contribution to this assessment is through the voices and experiences of the women themselves.

It is concluded that three salient tenets of organisational culture that have a significant impact on the experiences, retention, development and progression of women are: the creation of a learning culture that is rooted in a philosophy of understanding coaching careers as journeys not cliffs; leadership behaviour that is inclusive, valuing, championing of, and reflective of diversity; and the significance of supportive vertical and horizontal relationships. First, the participants spoke of the need for career development to be conceptualised as a journey, which can include multiple breaks and 'stop offs', different routes that deviate but route back to the main path, and that are all equally valued. This would be borne out of establishing a *learning culture*. Coaching and tutoring roles should be conceived as *careers* and as *professions*, and part

of that credibility comes from establishing a culture of learning that is an ongoing, flexible, process not outcome driven, and positive (Schein, 2004). This culture should also be driven from the 'top down' to ensure it is embedded within the organisation as it is such leadership that is mainly responsible for compliance to cultural norms (but not always culture formation) (Schein, 2004). What is also essential is that this leadership is reflective of the workforce it manages. The women coaches and tutors spoke of the impact of diverse and inclusive management for their own progression. For inclusive leadership to have the desired effect however, a commitment to diversity must be central to the "how things get done" in an organisation, not just an espoused value or vision. Without this, those outside of the 'norm' can feel marginalised and discriminated against. Linked to a culture of learning, so too should styles of leadership be grounded in similar values: flexible, individual, creative, autonomous, and welcoming of diversity.

The third key tenet of organisational culture is supportive, positive, sustained, and meaningful relationships both above and across the organisation. This is not just in the form of mentoring - a popular strategy that is often considered as a 'solution' to the under-representation or retention of different groups of women. It must extend to a culture of sponsorship within daily interactions and a positive management style by those who manage coaches and tutors. Sponsorship has an explicit aim of advancement through exposure to opportunities and relationships to improve the promotion and capability of coaches and tutors. It is again, grounded in a basic assumption of the value of women in these roles rather than just simply another strategy or initiative. In addition to the quality of these relationships, it should be considered how access is gained to such interactions and connections. Greater transparency, communication and investment in employees such as coaches and tutors, are methods to enhance access to facilitative relationships.

The intention of the present study was not to be solely critical of organisational culture within a particular sporting NGB, in this case The FA, and the link to the experiences of women coaches and tutors. Whilst an element of critique is needed to evaluate what is and what is not working to progress more groups of women, what is also required is a proposal of what may assist the development of a more diverse coaching workforce, as well as support more positive working experiences. The FA have made recent changes regarding the accessibility of the UEFA B licence course for different groups of coaches, including the location and costs of courses (The Football Association, 2017b). They have also invested in The FA Coaching Bursary Programme to develop all women coaches and Black and Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME:

a term used in UK policy) men coaches in the grassroots game and at the elite level (The Football Association, 2017a).

For future research, this window into organisational culture could be elicited from other culture access points. Such methods could include ‘cultural walks’ around an organisation, observations of employee, employer, customer (in this case, athletes) interactions as well as document analysis of key organisational literature. Nevertheless, as Schein (2004) reminds us, these will only give us partial, and at times inaccurate, insights into organisational culture. Personal voices yield the most powerful meanings and entries into organisational cultures (Dailey & Browning, 2014; Testa & Sipe, 2013). At the same time, more work is needed to understand notions of difference between women’s experiences. The coaches and tutors who contributed to this research were mostly White, reflective of the UK coaching population, and occupy a privileged racial position within a white dominated organisation. There is also a lack of discussion of disability for example, and all the participants identified as non-disabled. Gender was forefronted in this research and gender was expressed by the participants as the most salient relation of power. However, the intersectionality of women coaches’ experiences and what works particularly for different groups of women coaches and tutors needs to be explored to fully represent the diversity of their realities (e.g. Author A, 2016; Author B et al, 2016; 2017; Borland & Bruening, 2010; Carter-Francique & Olushola, 2016). As two White British women, how we approach, interpret and (re)present the participants experiences and organisational landscape is impacted by our own social identities and lived experiences. We are mindful of our own White privileges, interconnected with multiple other social identities, and the responsibility to use this positional power as researchers to challenge rather than perpetuate power structures. Future research must continue a more complex interrogation of the sport organisational culture about what changes are needed to grow a more diverse workforce as well as a positive individual experience.

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